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A Study of Time, Convenience and Entertaining

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Introduction

Pinpointing trends in food preparation or usage and supermarket shopping habits is critical for the Food Marketing Institute and Better Homes and Gardens® magazine in staying on target with the needs of America's consumers. With a goal of tracking these trends over five years, in 1987 the Food Marketing Institute and Better Homes and Gardens commissioned a study covering these areas:

- Food patterns and meal consumption.
- Nutrition.
- Information sources, planning and purchasing.

This summary on time, convenience and entertaining contains the results of the survey among "involved" food preparers and households. Only "involved" food preparers and households are documented, because they represent the vast majority of reporting households (757 from a total of 862) and because the most interesting information come from these.

The definition of involvement follows:

- **Involved Food Preparers:** Those male and female heads of household who reported preparing an evening meal in the household at least once a month or preparing part of an evening meal — a main dish, side dish, or dessert — at least once a week.
- **Involved Households:** Those households in which the interviewed head of household reported preparing an evening meal in the household at least once a month or part of an evening meal — a main dish, side dish, or dessert — at least once a week.

Additional summaries from this study covering 1) food patterns and meal consumption, 2) nutrition and 3) information sources, planning and purchasing are available. Supermarket personnel may obtain these from the Food Marketing Institute and manufacturers from Better Homes and Gardens magazine.

Special Notes

All charts are based on the 757 "involved" food preparers/households or a subsample noted after the specific question. "Involved" food preparers and "involved" households are used interchangeably. The percentages shown in each table are calculated on the base number noted. These percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding or multiple response.

In the text, when percentages are noted for a respondent, it is assumed that the survey participant is speaking for his or her household only.

For more specific information on the study and sampling tolerances, the methodology is found at the end of this summary.

While care has been taken to summarize study results completely, specific charts and applicable demographic groups have been selected to show the important points in the study.

Highlights on Time, Convenience and Entertaining

About half of survey participants say cooking is easier than five years ago.

Fifty-four percent of the sample say cooking and meal preparation is easier, and the 25-44 year olds, working females and those with children are in the most agreement. Four of 10 survey participants (42%) are cooking less than five years ago, while three of 10 (29%) admit to cooking more.

Demographics greatly affect time spent in cooking and meal preparation.

The average time spent cooking in a typical week is 7.7 hours, but women spend 8.9 hours cooking per week on average compared to 5.7 hours for men. Nonworking women spend the most time in meal preparation (10.0) and those with children spend a bit more time than those without children (7.9 versus 7.6 hours respectively).

Cooking is on the increase among those 25-44 and men.

While those age 25-44 and men spend a lower number of hours in cooking on the average than do respondents 45 and over and women, 36% of those 25-44 year olds and 39% of the men say this is an increase versus only 17% of those 45 and over and 24% of women.

Entertaining is frequent, with over half entertaining two or more times a month.*

About 55% of all demographic groups agree that they entertain two or more times a month. Nonworking females are the most likely to entertain once a week or more often (38%).

While those 45 and over and those without children entertain more frequently, the growth is among the 25-44 year olds and those with youngsters.

Thirty-four percent of those 45 and over entertain once a week or more often while that's true of 25% of the 25-44 year olds; and 32% of those with no children versus 27% of those with children have guests that frequently. However, 30% of the 25-44 year olds say this represents more entertaining compared to only 14% of the 45 and over group, while 29% of those with children play host more often but only 19% of those without youngsters do so.

Two thirds say relatives, and half agree friends, are the typical guests.

Sixty-four percent of respondents say relatives and, 56% say friends, are those they entertain typically. Those 25-44 are more likely to entertain friends (61%) than are those 45 and over (51%). Working women (72%) and those in two-income households (73%) are the most likely to host relatives.

The highest percentage (36%) don't plan specially for guests, but working women are bigger planners than nonworking women.

While 30% of working women and 35% of nonworking women say they plan the same for family as for entertaining, 28% of working women versus 14% of nonworking women agree that guests demand an extra effort.

Entertaining frequency is affected by the number of friends and/or by a recent move.

"More friends now" is given as the reason that 28% of respondents are entertaining more now than five years ago. A "new location/moved/fewer friends" is the reason 27% say they're doing less entertaining.

* Entertaining is defined as an occasion on which adults visited and food was served.

Ease of Cooking

- *Over half say cooking and meal preparation is easier than five years ago.*
- *Respondents 25-44, working females and those with children are the most likely to say the task is easier.*

Fifty-four percent of the total sample say cooking and meal preparation is easier than five years ago, not a surprising finding since the study reveals that respondents are employing convenience options to make their cooking patterns fit time demands.* Only eight percent say cooking is more difficult, while nearly four in ten say that task is about the same as it was five years ago. Two demographic groups, those 25-44 and working females, are much more likely to say the cooking load has eased than are their older and nonworking counterparts. For example, while 59% of 25-44 year olds and working women think cooking is easier, only 49% of those 45 or more and 47% of nonworking females say that is true. Noticeable too is that even those with children, who in all likelihood might experience more cooking demands with growing youngsters, still slightly outpace those without children (56% vs. 53%) in asserting that the cooking task is now easier.

* The question of convenience is covered in the survey booklet on food patterns and meal consumption.

Table 1

"As you see it, overall, is cooking and meal preparation easier, more difficult, or about the same as it was, say, five years ago?"

(Base = Those who are involved with cooking and meal preparation)

	Involved Households							
	Total	25–44	45 or More	Children in Household	No Children in Household	Working Females	Nonworking Females	Two-Income Households
Easier	54%	59%	49%	56%	53%	59%	47%	55%
More difficult	8	6	10	9	8	7	9	7
About the same	37	34	40	35	38	34	43	38
Was not involved in cooking / meal preparation five years ago	1	0	1	*	1	0	0	*
Don't know / no opinion	*	0	*	0	*	0	*	*
(Base)	(757)	(375)	(325)	(325)	(432)	(295)	(206)	(384)

* Less than ½%.

Amount of Time Spent in Cooking and Meal Preparation*

- *While the average hours in a typical week that men and women survey respondents spend in cooking and meal preparation is 7.7, time spent varies widely by demographic group. (For example, women spend an average of 8.9 hours.)*
- *Three of 10 survey participants are spending more time cooking, while four of 10 are cooking less than five years ago.*
- *While women, those 45 or more and nonworking women spend the most time in cooking and meal preparation, the greatest growth is among men and those 25-44.*
- *Change in time spent cooking is most dramatic among the 25-44 year olds and working women.*
- *Cooking time is slightly higher in households with children.*

The average hours spent per week by a survey participant may be 7.7, but the *real* story is that time spent in this pursuit is in flux and varies widely by demographic group. For example, while three of 10 (29%) respondents say they're spending more time on cooking and meal preparation than five years ago, more than four of 10 (42%) are spending less time. While women spend far more time on cooking in a typical week than men (8.9 hours versus 5.7 hours respectively), men are actually gaining on women in this area, since 39% of men (versus 24% of women) say their cooking hours represent an increase. Conversely nearly half of women (49%) say they're spending less time cooking, but that's true of only 31% of men.

Look at age and an unmistakeable pattern of change is revealed that's not readily apparent by focusing strictly on average time spent. For example, the *average* respondent 25-44 spends 7.2 hours per week on meal preparation while those 45 and over prepare meals 8.2 hours per week. However, the 25-44 year olds are *much more likely* to be *increasing* the time spent (36% of 25-44 year olds versus only 17% of those 45 or more are spending more hours on food preparation) and *much less likely* to be *decreasing* the hours spent (39% of 25-44 year olds are spending less time, but 48% of 45 and older respondents are spending less time).

As might be expected nonworking women, who logically may have more time to cook, are spending an average of 10 hours per week in meal preparation, while nonworking women are spending only eight hours a week. Of special interest here is that working women are changing more than nonworking women. A higher percentage of working women than nonworking women (25% versus 20%) say they are cooking *more* than five years ago *and* a higher percentage of working women also say they're cooking *less* (51% of working women cook less; 47% of nonworking women cook less).

Respondents with children are slightly more likely to spend more time cooking than those without children (7.9 versus 7.6 median hours per week).

* This information is covered in Tables 2 and 3.

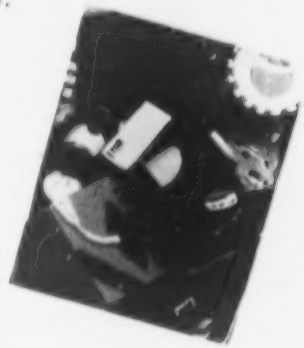
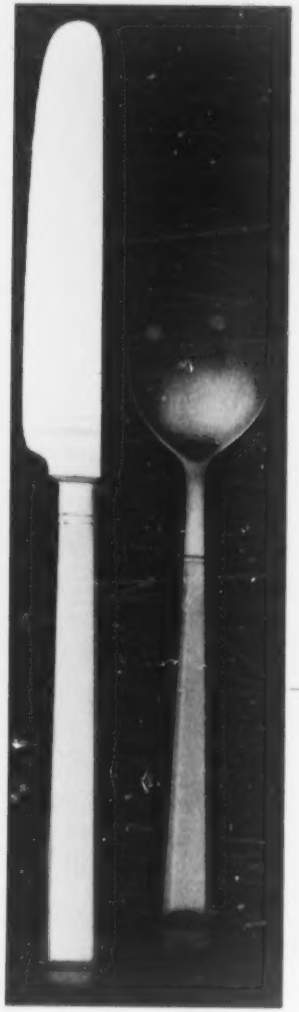


Table 2



"During a typical week, about how many hours do you, yourself, spend in cooking and meal preparation? This would include any food or meals which you are involved in preparing at home."

(Base = Those who are involved with cooking and meal preparation)

Involved Households

	Total	Males	Females	25-44	45 or More	Children in Household	No Children in Household	Working Females	Nonworking Females
1 - 4 hours	33%	51%	23%	35%	33%	31%	35%	24%	22%
5 - 10 hours	39	30	43	41	34	38	39	49	35
11 - 20 hours	18	11	22	16	20	20	17	20	24
21 hours or more	5	1	8	3	7	5	5	4	13
Don't know / no opinion / no response	5	6	4	5	5	6	5	3	5
Mean hours	7.7	5.7	8.9	7.2	8.2	7.9	7.6	8.0	10.0
(Base)	(757)	(253)	(504)	(375)	(325)	(325)	(432)	(295)	(206)

Table 3

"Is that more hours or fewer hours than you spent on cooking and meal preparation than, say, five years ago?"

(Base = Those who spend any time in cooking and meal preparation)

	Involved Households						
	Total	Males	Females	25-44	45 or More	Working Females	Nonworking Females
More	29%	39%	24%	36%	17%	25%	20%
Less	42	31	49	39	48	51	47
About the same	28	30	27	24	34	23	34
Don't know / no opinion	1	*	1	1	1	1	0
(Base)	(718)	(239)	(479)	(356)	(306)	(284)	(192)

*Less than ½%

Frequency of Entertaining Adults*

- *Three in 10 respondents (30%) say adults visit their home and food is served once a week or more often; over half (55%) say that scenario is reenacted two or more times a month.*
- *Nonworking females are more likely to say they entertain once a week or more (38%) than are those of any other demographic group noted.*
- *The 25-44 year olds and those with children are much more likely than their counterparts to register an increase in entertaining.*
- *Working women are more likely to be changing their entertaining frequency than nonworking women.*

Across the board, about 55% of respondents entertain two or more times a month. On the other hand, 30% of total survey participants entertain once a week or more often, but this percentage varies by demographic group.

Age Older respondents (45 or more) are somewhat more likely to entertain weekly (34%) than are those 25-44 (25%).

Children Those with no children also outpace respondents with youngsters in weekly entertaining (32% versus 27% respectively).

Working Thirty-eight percent of nonworking women entertain once a week or more often, but that's the case among only 29% of working females.

However, look at the above-stated facts and the picture is only partially complete. For it is among the younger age group and those with children where there is any real growth in entertaining. For example, 30% of the 25-44 year old group entertain more often and 28% entertain less than five years ago; however only 14% of the 45 or more group entertain with greater frequency, but 28% of this group have guests less often. That same relationship holds true for those with children. While nearly three in 10 (29%) of those with children agree they're entertaining more frequently, only 19% of those without youngsters are increasing entertaining.

Probably the group in the greatest state of flux is working women. While these respondents nearly match the total respondent figures in entertaining frequency, working women are more likely both to be entertaining more often (26% versus 21%) *and* less often than their nonworking counterparts (21% versus 27% respectively).

* "Entertaining" is used here and in the future to mean that respondents have had adults visit their homes and food is served. The summary above covers Tables 4 *and* 5.

Table 4

"How often do one or more adults visit your household and food is served? Would you say once a week or more often; two or three times a month; once a month; once every several months; rarely; or never?

	Involved Households							
	Total	25-44	45 or More	Children in Household	No Children in Household	Working Females	Nonworking Females	Two-Income Households
Once a week or more often	30%	25%	34%	27%	32%	29%	38%	27%
	} 55%	} 54%	} 54%	} 55%	} 55%	} 55%	} 61%	} 56%
Two or three times a month	25	29	20	28	23	26	23	29
Once a month	21	21	22	22	21	23	16	24
Once every several months	11	12	11	13	10	13	9	12
Rarely	9	11	7	10	8	7	9	7
Never	4	2	7	1	6	3	5	1
No response	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
(Base)	(757)	(375)	(325)	(325)	(432)	(295)	(206)	(384)

Table 5

"Is that more often, less often, or about the same as five years ago?"

(Base = Those who have adults visit and food is served)

	Involved Households							
	Total	25-44	45 or More	Children in Household	No Children in Household	Working Females	Nonworking Females	Two-Income Households
More often	22%	30%	14%	29%	19%	26%	21%	25%
Less often	29	28	28	26	30	37	27	29
About the same	49	42	58	44	51	37	52	45
Don't know / no opinion / no response	*	*	0	*	0	0	0	*
(Base)	(736)	(369)	(311)	(321)	(415)	(289)	(197)	(379)

*Less than ½%.

Type of Guests and Planning

- *Nearly two of three survey participants say relatives are the usual guests, while 56% say they typically host friends.*
- *Those 25-44 are more likely to entertain friends than those 45 and over.*
- *Working women and those in two-income households are the most likely to invite relatives.*
- *The highest percentage (36%) agree that planning for visitors doesn't differ from typical household meals.*
- *Working women are much more likely than nonworking women to use more planning/preparation time when expecting guests.*

The highest percentage of survey participants (64%) say they entertain relatives, a pattern that holds true for all the demographic groups shown. Working females (72%) and those in two-income households (73%) are the most likely to host relatives. Fifty-six percent of total respondents welcome friends into their home. Those 25-44 are the most likely to entertain friends (61%); adults 45 or more (51%) and working females (51%) are the least likely to do so.

Thirty-six percent of respondents state that there's no special planning for entertaining, although one in five agree they expend more planning time on guest occasions. That pattern is somewhat different, however, for working and nonworking women. While 28% of working women say entertaining takes more time for planning and preparation, that's true of only 14% of nonworking women.

Table 6

"When you have such adults visit and food is served, who would they typically be?"

(Base = Those who have adults visit and food is served)

		Involved Households						
	Total	25-44	45 or More	Children in Household	No Children in Household	Working Females	Nonworking Females	Two-Income Households
Relatives	64%	62%	67%	67%	63%	72%	64%	73%
Friends (of respondent or other adult household member)	56	61	51	54	58	51	57	54
(Base)	(736)	(369)	(311)	(321)	(415)	(289)	(197)	(379)

(Multiple Responses Accepted)

(Main Mentions)

Table 7

"When adults visit your household and food is served, do you plan what you will serve in the same way as you typically plan the household's meals; in other words, how does planning to serve food for visitors differ?"

(Base = Those who are involved with cooking and meal planning and who have adults visit and food is served)

	Involved Households		
	Total	Working Women	Nonworking Women
It doesn't differ / no special planning	36%	30%	35%
Take more time planning / preparing	20	28	14
Prepare larger meals / plan for more people	13	15	14
Try to plan / prepare / serve what guests will like	12	11	13
(Base)	(735)	(289)	(197)

(Multiple Responses Accepted

(Main Mentions)

Changing Entertaining Patterns

- *In most cases, the biggest reason that respondents entertain more often than five years ago is that they have more friends now.*
- *Fewer friends or a change in location is the major reason adults entertain less.*

Friends or the lack of friends seem to be a barometer for entertaining activity, especially among certain demographic groups. "More friends" is the reason given for an entertaining increase by nearly three of ten respondents (28%), while about the same percentage (27%) say they're hosts less because they have fewer friends (either because the respondents moved or for other reasons). Those 25-44 (31%) and those with children (34%) are far more likely to say that "more friends" has been the impetus for more entertaining than are those with opposite demographics. The highest percentage in the 45 and over group entertain more now because they "have planned family activities" (35%). That's only 10% among the 25-44 year olds.

Interesting, too, is a look at why working and nonworking women entertain less. Of special note is the fact that nearly one in five nonworking women say they're too lazy to entertain; only seven percent of working women agree.

*This information is covered in Tables 8 and 9.

Table 8

"Why do you have adults over more often than five years ago?"

(Base = Those who are involved with cooking and meal preparation and who have adults over more often that five years ago)

	Involved Households				
	Total	25-44	45 or More	Children in Household	No Children in Household
More friends now	28%	31%	23%	34%	22%
Have planned family activities to keep us together	18	10	35	15	20
Have more time now	16	14	20	12	20
Have a home / house / more space	12	15	2	11	13
Moved / closer to friends and family	8	11	2	10	6
(Base)	(176)	(112)	(46)	(96)	(80)

(Multiple Responses Accepted)

(Main Mentions)

Table 9

"Why do you have adults over less often than five years ago?"

(Base = Those who are involved with cooking and meal preparation and who have adults over less often that five years ago)

	Involved Households		
	Total	Working Women	Nonworking Women
New location / moved / fewer friends	27%	27%	29%
Household has fewer members	20	22	14
Lack time (unspecified)	15	17	13
Don't have the time — work-related mentions	11	16	4
I'm lazy / too tired to entertain	9	7	19
(Base)	(219)	(103)	(57)

(Multiple Responses Accepted)

(Main Mentions)

Methodology

The data for this survey were collected from 862 telephone interviews conducted in September and October 1987 by Opinion Research Corporation. Households contacted for the survey were selected by using ORC's Random Digit Dialing (RDD) system to create a random sample of U.S. telephone households that closely approximates the total U.S. population. However, a statistical weighting procedure also was employed when the data were tabulated to bring the survey results into balance with actual universe proportions. The RDD system excludes commercial numbers and includes unlisted and new telephone numbers as well as listed numbers.

Each household was screened by the following two criteria:

1) male or female head of household
2) degree of involvement in cooking all or part of an evening meal

Heads of household who cooked all of an evening meal at least once a month, as well as those preparing part of that meal at least once a week, were considered to be "involved" food preparers living in "involved" households. Those preparing all or part of an evening meal less often than that were considered to be "uninvolved" food preparers living in "uninvolved" households. Since the vast majority were "involved" households and because "involved" respondents offer the most valuable information on food use and shopping patterns, the information in this summary has been limited only to these households.

Demographic Profile of Involved Food Preparers: 1987

	Number in Sample	Percentage
Total Involved Food Preparers	757	100%
Sex		
Men	253	37
Women	504	63
Working	295	54
Nonworking	206	44

	Total	Males	Females
Marital Status			
Married	61%	60%	61%
Single, widowed, divorced, separated	40	40	38
Spouse Works	72%	64%	76%
Age			
Under 25	6%	8%	5%
25-34	23	29	20
35-44	21	22	20
45-54	15	12	17
55-64	15	14	16
65-74	13	12	13
75 and over	7	3	9
Average Age	47 years	43 years	48 years
Education			
High school or less	47%	40%	52%
Some college/college grad.	42	47	39
Post graduate	10	13	8
Household Size			
One	24%	23%	25%
Two	33	35	32
Three	18	18	18
Four or more	25	24	25
Average Household Size	2.6	2.6	2.6
Type of Household			
With children	32%	32%	33%
Without children	66	68	66
Home Ownership			
Own home	67%	61%	71%
Rent home	33	39	29

	Total	Males	Females
Income			
Less than $20,000	32%	27%	35%
$20,000 - $39,000	33	36	32
$40,000 - $74,000	19	22	18
$75,000 or more	5	8	3
Average Income	$30,900	$35,300	$28,200
Race			
White	88%	86%	89%
Black	10	11	9
Oriental/Asian/ Pacific Indian	*	*	*
American Indian/ Alaskan Native	1	1	1
Other	2	2	1
Region			
Northeast	23%	23%	23%
North Central	25	26	25
South	34	33	34
West	17	18	17

Northeast includes Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont and West Virginia.

North Central includes Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota and Wisconsin.

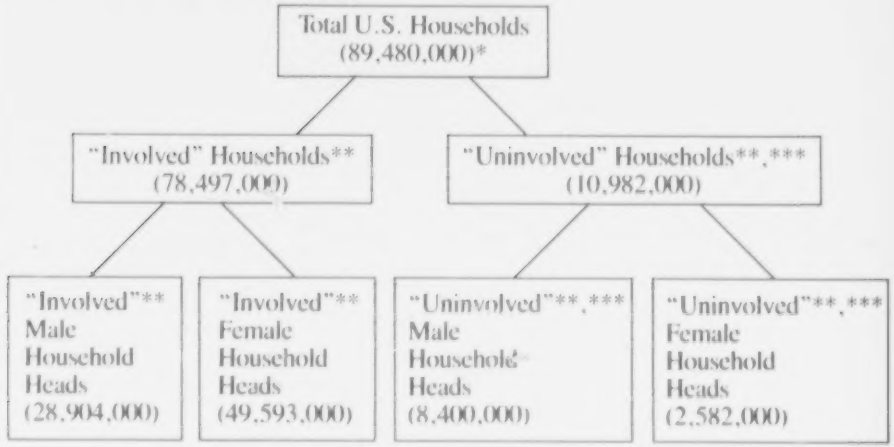
South includes Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia.

West includes Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington and Wyoming.

*Less than ½%.

Projectability

Because it was important that the research data be projectable to the U.S. population, the following chart illustrates the size of the universe of U.S. households* and its composition in terms of the household subgroups that were surveyed**:


Total U.S. Households (89,480,000)*
"Involved" Households** (78,497,000)
"Uninvolved" Households**,*** (10,982,000)
"Involved"** Male Household Heads (28,904,000)
"Involved"** Female Household Heads (49,593,000)
"Uninvolved"**,*** Male Household Heads (8,400,000)
"Uninvolved"**,*** Female Household Heads (2,582,000)

*Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-20, No. 411, **Households and Family Characteristics: March 1987,** U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1987 (Issued September 1987).

**For each of these subgroups the estimates are based on the level of incidence obtained during the interviewing process.

***It is important to note that these sub-universe estimates may overstate the true number of households in which *both* household heads are "uninvolved" food preparers. This is due to the fact that the operational definition of an "uninvolved" household used in this study is based on information about the interviewed head of household and does not directly take into account information about the other household head's level of involvement in food preparation.

Sampling Variation

With any study the results are subject to sampling variation i.e., the difference between survey results and those that would be gathered by studying the entire population. In general, sampling variation is less when the size of the sample is large and the sample result approaches 0% or 100%, rather than being in a middle range. The following table shows the approximate range of sampling variation for involved males and females, two major groups described in this study. For example, in Table 1, 59% of those 25-44 say cooking and meal preparation is easier. This percentage is based on the sample of 375 adults 25-44. The table below shows that the sample variation for a 59% response at that base is plus or minus 5%.

Sampling Tolerances (+ / −) at 95% Confidence Level for Involved Males and Females

Sample Size	Type of Group	Approximate Sampling Tolerances 10% or 90%	20% or 80%	30% or 70%	40% or 60%	50%
375	Adults 25-44	3%	4%	5%	5%	5%
325	Adults 45 and over	3%	4%	5%	5%	5%

Applying the sampling variation to the 59% response, the true proportion of 25-44 year old respondents who say cooking is easier should be no less than 54% nor more than 64%.

In addition to the sampling variation that can be figured for a single piece of data, it's also helpful to determine whether the differences *between* certain percentages are real or the result of sampling variation. Looking at Table 1 again, while 59% of adults 25-44 say cooking is easier, the same is true of 49% of those 45 or more. The 25-44 year old data is based on 375 responses and the 45 and over on 325 responses. The sampling tolerance is 7% and since there's a 10% differential between the two age range percentages, this difference is statistically significant.

Sampling Tolerances Levels (at 95% Confidence Level) To Use in Evaluating Differences Between Two Percentage Results

Sample Comparison	Approximate Sampling Tolerances 10% or 90%	20% or 80%	30% or 70%	40% or 60%	50%
Various Key Subgroup Comparisons					
757 vs. 375	4%	5%	6%	6%	6%
325	4%	5%	6%	6%	6%
375 vs. 325	4%	6%	7%	7%	7%